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MEDIA RELEASE

INSUFFICIENT SERVICES IN VICTORIA'S MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

"Critical incidents and day-to-day service failures have not been given sufficient priority by the government and professional bodies in Victoria," Chair of the Mental Health Council of Australia, Keith Wilson said today following the launch of *Not For Service: Experiences of Injustice and Despair in Mental Health Care in Australia*, the most significant report into mental health in Australia for over a decade.

"There is also a critical lack of mental health beds including acute care beds and medium term services. There was widespread and strong community anger in Victoria at the Government's failure to deliver on the rhetoric of reform", Mr Wilson said.

Not For Service exposes the persistent and distressing experiences of Australians dealing with mental illness that result from the systemic deficiencies of the mental health systems twelve years after all Australian Governments initiated the National Mental Health Strategy to tackle decades of neglect.

The Report states that Victoria reports the highest percentage of expenditure to non-government organisations and has the best developed psychiatric rehabilitation services.

Mental Health Council Board Member Rob Knowles said, "Victoria may be seen as the leading state in mental health services delivery; however the general level of distress expressed by consumers, carers, and non-government and professional bodies was still very high. It is clear there is a continuing lack of accountability for mental health spending, service deficiencies and critical incidents."

Professor Ian Hickie, a co-author the report stresses that Australia urgently needs all governments to commit to a process of genuine and well-resourced mental health reform. "What we do not need is continued blaming of those who use the services, those professionals who provide the services or those independent bodies who report on them. Critics have been constantly ignored or trivialised by the Department of Human Services," Professor Hickie said.

Not For Service calls on all Australian governments to increase expenditure on mental health care services by 1% per annum for each of the next five years, bringing expenditure by 2010 to 12% of total health care funding in real terms.

The Victorian Government must increase spending on mental health in 2006/7 by \$100m based on their 2004/5 budget.

Not For Service has been compiled by the Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) and the Brain and Mind Research Institute (BRMI, University of Sydney), in association with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC).

Copies of *Not For Service* can be found at: www.mhca.org.au

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